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Javed Ahmad Ghamidi vs. Ali Sina Part IV

Ali Sina's response:

October 24, 2006

Dear Mr. Ghamidi and Mr, Zaheer.

I am glad to hear from you again. I am also glad that the Ramadan is over and you'll have more time to be with us. We really enjoy and value your company and learn from your insights. This exchange of ideas will benefit everyone. Truth is the spark that is flashed when opposing ideas clash. I am certain that if we divest ourselves from prejudices and preconceived ideas, at the end we will find the truth.

Now, let me start with our discussion. Yes, I have nothing else to add to the subjects of intercession and the wrong use of the pronoun in the Qur'an. As for the first topic I am satisfied with what I have already said and so rested my case. As for the use of the wrong pronoun in the Qur'an, you say it is to add beauty to the language and that it should be seen as poetry. I don't know how happy Muhammad would be with this characterization. Apparently he was disdainful of poets to the extent that he wanted to commit suicide when he had that strange vision on Mount Hira and thought he had become a poet. He said there are two groups of people whom he despised most: the poets and the kahins (soothsayers).

Furthermore, the Qur'an, on repeated occasions reiterates its claim to be a clear book (5:15) easy to understand (44:58, 54:22, 54:32, 54:40) explained in detail (6:114), conveyed clearly, (5:16, 10:15) with no doubt in it (2:1), with clear ordinances, (98:3), of divine nature, (10:37) full of wisdom, (36:2) etc. Yet you tell us that we must first learn its "scheme of presentation" in order to understand its meaning. If that is the case then what shall we make of the above claims of the clarity of the Qur'an? If we first need to learn the "scheme" of the book before we begin to understand it, then the claim that the book is clear and easy to understand is false. Please show me one verse where it says before understanding this book you must first learn its scheme of presentation. What is this scheme of presentation? Will you please explain it to us?

Anyway, by equating the Qur'an to poetry, you basically disarm me completely. I can no longer point to its grammatical, linguistic, scientific or even logical errors because it is a book of poetry and poets are licensed to break all sorts of rules. That is the distinction and the privilege of poets. We let the poets to indulge in fantasies and breach all the norms of language and commonsense if necessary, to stir our soul. If we accept the Qur'an as a book of poetry, we have to acknowledge that it is a very bad poetry.

Then again, the Qur'an adamantly denies being a book of poetry. "It is not the word of a poet; little is it that you believe". (69:41) And, "We have not taught him poetry, nor is it meet for him; it is nothing but a reminder and a plain Qur'an." (36:69)

You see? The Qur'an claims to be plain. Why would you need to study the "scheme of presentation" to understand a plain and clear book?

The main problem in considering the Qur'an as a book of poetry is that as such it ceases to be a book of guidance. You can say it is an inspirational book but you won't be able to call it a book of guidance. A book of guidance must be clear and must not leave room for interpretation. This is the claim made in the Qur'an. If you want to go from A to B, you need a roadmap that tells you exactly how to go there. You don't want a poetic direction so confusing that would leave room for different interpretations, or you would get lost. The very fact that you and I both agree that Muslims are lost is that this alleged book of guidance is not guiding them. It is only a bad poetry disguised as the book of guidance. Its spiritual message, if any, is unclear and unintelligible, while its message of hate and violence is loud and clear.

You think by shifting from one pronoun to another the Qur'an becomes a literary work of art. Personally, I do not see much beauty in the Qur'an, but I have no doubt that you do. Let us say beauty is in the eyes of the beholder and move on to the next topic. There was a time that I thought the Qur'an is beautiful. One of the surahs I used to think was beautiful to recite was Surah al Masadd. Then I found out that it is nothing but curse. You must agree that in Arabic it rhymes nicely. If you don't know what it says, you may actually enjoy it.

You wrote:

> "It is only after you have sincerely understood a text by appreciating the methodology of presentation which the author of the text himself is suggesting that you have a right to criticize the text or else it would come under the category of non-serious criticism. After you understand the scheme of presentation of a text, you have a right to criticize both that scheme as well as the text on the basis of your observation that the text is violating the principles stated by itself."

Are you suggesting that we should take first, a course on how to read the Qur'an before reading it? Will you please tell us why a book that claims to be so clear and easy to understand is so complicated? The Qur'an says that the unbelievers are "the vilest of animals"(8:55). How should we interpret this verse? In what scheme these insulting words mean something different than what they appear to mean? This to me sounds a hate speech. How would Muslims react if someone says Muslims are the vilest of animals? The Qur'an encourages the Muslims to slay the unbelievers wherever they find them (2:191), do not take them as friends and helpers (3:28), fight them and show them harshness (9:123), and smite their heads (47:4). Under what light should we read these, and many other gory and hate mongering verses like these so we could instead love all mankind, respect others,

mingle in amity with people of all faiths, and be kind, loving and accepting of everyone? Don't you think these verses are responsible for the fact that Muslims are violent and intolerant of others?

Let us say you are right and there is a scheme of presentation that Muslims have failed to see and that is why they have behaved like savages during these 1400 years. Doesn't this make Allah a cruel and cynical deity? Why would he confuse people with ambiguous messages? If Allah wanted us to love all mankind, why he did not say so? Why he said kill the unbelievers wherever you find them? Why there are no verses saying, people of all faiths are your brothers and sisters, love all mankind as members of your family? Why he said: "Muhammad is the messenger of Allah; and those who are with him are harsh against unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other?" (48:29):

You ask me to be a sincere student and not to "pick faults". Is that your definition of sincerity? I think that is the definition of gullibility. If I try to see no evil, hear no evil or say no evil, I will end up believing in evil. You are men of science. Will you accept any scientific theory in this way, so lackadaisically, so uncritically? Why should we not be equally, if not more, rigorous in finding the truth about God?

If a message is from God, it should not have any faults. If it has a single fault, then it is not from God. What you are suggesting is recipe for disaster. What if a charlatan claims to be a prophet of God? How do I know this person is not lying if I don't try to see his faults? There have been many cults that have seduced many people, leading them to perdition. Just think of cults such and Aum Shinrikyo, whose followers, mindlessly believed in what their guru told them and released sarin gas in the subways of Tokyo, killing a dozen of innocent commuters and injuring hundreds of them for life. What about the cult of People's Temple, whose followers committed mass suicide in the jungles of Guyana after happily poisoning their own children? What about the cult of Heaven's Gate, Branch Davidian or hundreds of other cults whose followers believed and did not ask some basic questions? They did exactly what you suggest. They tried to be sincere and did not try to find faults in these cults. Can you question their sincerity? They proved their sincerity by sacrificing their lives. Do you question the sincerity of the suicide bombers? Sincerity alone, if not guided by reason and critical thinking can be deadly. Haven't you heard the expression, "the road to hell is paved with good intentions?"

If someone claims to be a messenger of God, we must not accept his claim unless all our questions are answered and we are satisfied that there are no holes in his claim. If there is one, he is not a messenger of God but a shameless liar, an impostor or a madman. God does not err and his religion must be logical. So don't be shy. Try hard to find faults in the claims of prophet pretenders and believe only if you find none. Do not let them intimidate you by saying it is not up to you to test God. You are not testing God. You are testing their claims. If they are indeed messengers of God, they should be able to answer all your questions. If they threaten you with hell, leave them not before spitting at their face, because they are charlatans and liars. This is the only way to find the truth, not by uncritically accepting any nonsense. Do not let anyone fool you with empty promises and

bogus claims. The message from God should come with the proof from God and that proof should satisfy our intellect and not insult it.

The reason we have so many faiths, religions, and sects, despite the fact that at most only one of them can be true, is that the followers don't question. They are eager to prove their sincerity and believe blindly without asking some important questions such as "what is the proof?" A simple and yet essential question! They believe, mislead by the feel-good factor and after being swayed by some logical fallacies.

You wrote:

> If we were not interested in sincerely understanding your messages and were bent upon picking faults in them, we could have pointed out several contradictions in what you have written to us as yet. However, that would have been a sheer waste of time and an exercise in futility.

No, it wouldn't. The reason we are having this debate is to find the flaws in each other's arguments. This is not an exercise in futility but the very reason we are having this discussion. We want to come to the truth. How else can we do that if we do not highlight each other's errors? You and I see the same things from different perspectives. From your vantage point you can see things that I don't, and vice versa. From where I am standing I may see an object as a disk. Seeing the same object from a different angle you could say, no you are mistaken; it's a cylinder. There might be a depth to the object that I can't see but you can. If you and I point to each other's errors, this is not a slight. We are humans. Our vision and understanding is limited by our vantage point. We don't and can't have the full picture of everything. So it is okay for us to err. And it is okay that we point out to each other's errors. The day I was born I was the most ignorant person in the world. Everything I know, I learned from others. Others like you, who corrected me and showed me my errors. There is no shame in us being wrong. We are humans and as such fallible. If I had never come out of Iran, I doubt I would have known what I know today. I probably would have believed in exact same things you believe. In fact in many ways I identify myself with you. I had the same humanitarian ideals that you have while I believed in the same faith that you believe and I could not see the discrepancy and contradiction between my stated belief and my love for mankind. We are to a great extent products of our environments.

As a self proclaimed ignorant, I attest that there is no shame in being ignorant. Shame is in obstinacy and in not willing to see the truth after it has become clear. We can err. However, when an alleged message of God is so beset with errors, we must question its source. The Qur'an claims to be the verbatim words of God. God is not fallible. Therefore if we find one error in the Qur'an, it's enough to disqualify it as the word of God.

There are hundreds of blunders and absurdities in the Qur'an. How can an infallible God err so much? If there were only one or a handful of errors, we could still argue that those verses have crept into the book in later stages. But when the book is replete with scientific heresies,

historic blunders, mathematical mistakes, logical absurdities, grammatical errors and ethical fallacies, we must question the legitimacy of its divine origin.

Therefore, what you define as “sincerity”, in my view is nothing but gullibility. The believers force themselves to believe in absurdities and call that sincerity. They interpret lack of critical thinking, i.e. simple mindedness, as "purity of heart". A sincere seeker is one who questions and is not satisfied with half-baked answers. A sincere seeker is a doubter. He does not rest until all his questions are answered. How can you claim sincerity when you give up questioning and believe in absurdities? This is recklessness, not sincerity. “If God did not want us to use our brain”, asked Galileo, “why he would give it to us?”

Logic is the measure of what is right and what is wrong, not the bogus claims of charlatans and impostors who want us to have faith and not question them. A true God would not expect us to believe in anything unless the clear proof is given. Muhammad himself, on many occasions, claimed that his message is clear. I want to see it. It is not clear to me and to billions of others who do not believe in him. We want proof. Where is the proof? The proof must be logical, irrefutable and conclusive. If I can find a single hole in it, that claim cannot be from God. If I tell you the earth is round, I can prove it. I do not expect you to have faith in my words, and you should not believe me if I resort to violence and force. If I tell you Gabriel visits me every night with a message from God and we play backgammon together, you must ask for proof. If I can’t prove my claim, chances are that I am either an impostor or a mentally sick man. It would be foolish for anyone to believe in my claim especially if I demand sacrifices from others and live an ungodly and pervert life as Muhammad did.

Why should we believe in Muhammad and not in equality-unproven claims of other prophet-pretenders and impostors? We know about all the bad things that Muhammad brought to the world, such as religious intolerance and misogyny that did not exist in Arabia before him. (The Arabs, even believed in a prophetess, Sijah, and women like Salma and Aisha led armies. Such thing is inconceivable today.) “Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached,” asked the wise Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus, six hundred years ago. The only answers Muslims had to this question, when it was repeated by Pope Benedict, were riots, burning of churches and killing an elderly nun and her bodyguard. Will you answer this question now? Will you tell us what new Muhammad brought that was not evil? I have counted innumerable evil things that this man brought. Will you tell us of one good thing that he brought?

You wrote:

> We have been informed in the Qur’an that the message of God Almighty comes to the messengers through angels.

How do you know this is true? If the Qur'an is a lie, then this claim also is a lie. This sounds to me circular reasoning. We ask what is the proof that Muhammad is a true messenger? You answer, it is written in the Qur'an. We ask how do we know the Qur'an is the word of God? You say, because Muhammad said so. This is logical fallacy, not proof. If there is one error in the Qur'an, then Muhammad is proven to be a liar and if Muhammad is a liar, then the entire story of an angle bringing God's message to him is a fairytale. Since you are yet to prove to us that the Quran is error-free, we cannot believe in silly stories such as Gabriel brining the message of God to Muhammad.

Abdullah ibn Abi Sarh, who was Muhammad's scribe and used to write down the Quran for him, realized that Muhammad was making things up. He was not an illiterate like Muhammad and often suggested better ways to compose the Quranic verses that Muhammad happily would agree. He escaped and went back to Mecca and told his story to everyone, which prompted Muhammad to decide to kill him even though he promised he would not kill anyone in Mecca if they surrendered.

In response to my question about a beast acting as a messenger of Allah you wrote:

> As for the mention of the animal, the Qur'an clarifies on several occasions the fact that after people refuse to accept God's message through the normal process of its presentation, He can use any of His signs to let such people know that their denial was not based on any evidence. For instance, on the day of judgment, it is mentioned that the limbs of human body would play the role of witnessing against the perpetrators of crimes. The reference to an animal in a Qur'anic passage is of similar nature

First of all disbelief does not need evidence, it is the one who makes a claim that has to provide the evidence. People don't need evidence to say Muhammad is a liar. Those who believe in him and want to shove it to other's throats that have to show the proof. Secondly, I am afraid you are engaging in the fallacy of *false dilemma*. You bring one unproven and unsubstantiated claim such as human limbs acquiring a mouth and testifying against themselves to prove that it is easy for animals to talk. This is like saying since 1+1= 7, then 2+2=13. Shouldn't you first prove the claim that human limbs testify against themselves before you use it as evidence to prove animals can also talk?

This is the whole problem with Islamic thinking. We accept one fallacy and since we have surrendered our intelligence and became believers we accept any absurdity afterwards. Let me quote three paragraphs from my upcoming book.

When Muhammad recounted his tale of ascending to the seventh heaven, Abu Bakr was stunned. He did not know what to make of this. This sounded utterly mad. He had two choices. He had to either admit that Muhammad was a loony and leave him or believe in his fantastical tales. There was no middle ground.

Ibn Ishaq says when Muhammad made his vision known, “many Muslims gave up their faith, some went to Abu Bakr and said, ‘What do you think of your friend? He alleges that he went to Jerusalem last night and prayed there, and came back to Mecca!’ He replied that they were lying about the apostle, but they said that he was in the mosque at that very moment, telling people about it. Abu Bakr said, ‘If he says so, then it is true. And what is so surprising in that? He tells me that communications from Allah, from heaven to earth, come to him in an hour of a day or night, and I believe him, and that is more extraordinary than that at which you boggle!’”

The logic is flawless. Basically what Abu Bakr was saying is that once you give up your rational faculty and believe in an absurdity, you might as well believe in anything. Once you let yourself to be fooled, then you should be prepared to be fooled again and again because there is no end to foolishness. How many people would let a 54 year old man sleep with their 9 year old daughter? Such thing requires extreme foolishness. This much foolishness, that you erroneously call “sincerity” is only possible through blind faith.

You are engaging in the same logical fallacy that Abu Bakr dabbled. You say since I have accepted the fairytale that human limbs, in the Day of Judgment, will testifying against themselves, why should I not believe in this ridiculous story of an animal messenger? However, this logical fallacy does not satisfy those of us who do not believe in the first absurd premise that you present as proof and therefore the claim that a beast will be called upon to act as a messenger of God, to us, seems ridiculous, to say the least.

Animals preaching the message of God and limbs testifying against themselves in the afterlife are very much like the fantastic adventures of Alice in the Wonderland. Methinks that the author of Islam, like Lewis Carroll, the author of Alice's Adventures, suffered from temporal lobe epilepsy.

I have written a new book called *Inside Muhammad’s Mind: The Prophet’s Mental Disorders.* In this book I have brought ample evidence to show that Muhammad was mentally sick. I would be delighted to send two copies to you fine gentlemen. You may be able to clear them from the customs by saying you want to write a refutation to it so Muslims are not deceived. You are scholars, I am sure you could say that. Actually I promise to publish your refutation in our site with a visible permanent link right next to where I advertise my book so people can read your refutation even before ordering my book. How do you like that? Compare this offer to the the fact that in my previous email I asked you to publish our debate in your site and you did not even acknowledged the request. Compare this offer to the fact that Pakistan has banned faithfreedom.org.

You talked about sincerity! Is this how Muslims prove their sincerity? If I am wrong and you have shown my errors, why not let the world see it? I am giving you the opportunity to expose my errors and prove once and for all that I am mistaken. Is this how we are committed to truth? I am not beating my chest. As I said the only victory I seek is the victory over my own ignorance. But how can we qualify this ban? What message are we sending to the world?

The message will get through eventually. It is too late to stop it. People will copy paste it to other forums that Muslims can read. But this ban will be a torn in the side of Islam. It will be perceived as the admission of defeat.

You wrote:

> The evidence of the beast will not be meant to convince any of the humans to accept the message. Instead, it will be used as a final measure to expose the indefensible stubbornness of the deniers of the message of God.

What is the purpose of that? Isn't hell enough proof? Why do we need an animal telling us what we will find soon on our own?

I think you are not comfortable with the fact that this beast is portrayed as the last messenger - a title Muhammad reserved for himself. You see the contradiction and try to minimize the role of this messenger beast. In either case the problem does not go away. The existence of this beast as a messenger of God does not only contradict other verses of the Qur'an, it is also absurd and the way you put it, redundant.

You say that the correct translation of the verse is:

> "And once the message will be delivered in an undeniable form to them, we might bring out a beast from the land to confirm that these men were not willing to believe in our signs"

Why "might"? Are you in doubt about this claim? The Arabic verse is:

وَإِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَخْرَجْنَا لَهُمْ دَابَّةً مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ

I don't think there is any question about this happening. All the translators of the Qur'an agree that this beast "will" or "shall" be brought forth from the earth to speak and there is no doubt about it. This is how this verse is translated.

Anyway, I don't know why this would make any difference. Even if the emergence of this beast is only a probability, as you say, it is still irrational.

You wrote:

> As for the mention of the animal, the Qur'an clarifies on several occasions
> the fact that after people refuse to accept God's message through the normal process of its presentation, He can use any of His signs to let such people know that their denial was not based on any evidence

The only thing that God should do is to arm his prophets with logical arguments. Any other "sign" is futile.

I want you to watch the following two video clips. They are made by Chris Angel, whom I believe to be the world's top magician. He is even better that our own Zakir Naik. Dr. Naik plays magic with words. He has fooled many Muslims into believing that the Qur'an contains science. But he can only fool those who are willing to be fooled. I have caught all his tricks and have exposed this charlatan here. Chris Angel uses different props. I have not been able to catch his tricks. This man **Flies, walks on water** (click) and does other amazing things. However, he is only a magician. Suppose someone comes and performs magic. Why should we believe in him? It is time that God treat us humans like grownups and stop this silly game of performing "miracles" to impress us. All he has to do for us to believe in his prophets is to give us logical arguments that satisfy our intelligence. Here is where Allah and his messenger have failed miserably. At least Jesus did some of the things Chris Angel does. Muhammad could not even do that. He acknowledged that other prophets had performed miracles, but that his only miracle is the Qur'an. As we are finding out, this book is anything but miraculous.

I look forward to hear from you soon. After you present your counter-argument, I will introduce yet another gross blunder of the Qur'an.

I wish you all the best and please remember that I am a fan no matter how we disagree on trivialities. :) To me, what really matters is the substance and in substance I have no disagreement with you. You and I mean good and work for the same ideals. I hope one day we can meet and I would like to squeeze your hands in friendship and perhaps talk about other stuff that we both agree. It would be an honor to have friends like you. I love good people. It makes no difference to me if they are Christians, Jews, Hindus, Muslims or believe in nothing. I value goodness. Beliefs are irrelevant. Some people are color-blind. I am religion-blind. I hope one day, everyone becomes religion-blind. That would be the day of the unity of mankind. What divide us, are beliefs and ideologies. These are not facts. They are just creeds. Belief is acceptance of a proposition without evidence. Wouldn't it be nice to get beyond them and discover that after all we are one people?

I remain sincerely yours.

Ali Sina